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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 03 PRAGUE 000262

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EUR/NCE FOR FICHTE, EUR/PRA FOR FRIEDT AND AZEVEDO, OSD FOR IARROBINO AND SADOWSKA, USNATO FOR SHEEHAN AND MALONEY, MDA FOR LEHNER AND JENKINS

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TAGS: PREL PGOV MASS MARR EZ

SUBJECT: MISSILE DEFENSE: CZECH REPUBLIC UPDATE MARCH 13

PRAGUE 00000262 001.2 OF 003

Classified By: Political Economic Counsellor Michael Dodman
for reasons 1.4 (b) and (d)

¶1. (C/NF) Summary: Representatives from Embassy met on March 12 with the Czech Government's interagency Missile Defense team for the first of what will be weekly coordination meetings. DFM Tomas Pojar observed that President Klaus' visit to the United States had been a success. Pojar commented that the additional missile defense meetings on the margins of that visit had also been promising, and had led him to develop a list of several issues to be addressed (listed below). Pojar was particularly enthusiastic about the future visit of Czech parliamentarians to U.S. missile defense sites and also by the likely visit by General Obering to Prague in April. In a separate initiative, the Ambassador held a private meeting with the Russian Ambassador on MD at which both pledged to remain transparent and manage tensions. A pro-missile defense demonstration visited the Embassy on March 12. Embassy Prague has established an internal structure to coordinate on MD. Points of contact are listed in paragraph 10. End summary.

¶2. (C) In the first of what will be weekly missile defense coordination meetings, representatives from Embassy met on March 12 with the Czech Government's Interagency Missile Defense team. Deputy Foreign Minister Tomas Pojar, leading the Czech side, commented that President Vaclav Klaus' visit to the United States had been a positive one. He outlined the following issues as being of importance to the Czech side:

¶3. (C/NF) Diplomatic Note:

-- Pojar could not give a date for the delivery of the Czech diplomatic note. He said the Czech Cabinet must meet first to authorize delivery of the Czech response. He promised to provide a heads up to the embassy on timing once a political decision had been made.

¶4. (C/NF) Foreign visits by Czechs to MD facilities:

-- Pojar said the MFA is working to find gaps in the Czech parliamentary schedule to allow for a visit to Ft. Greely and to Kwajalein. First indications are that April 16-20 would be the best window.

-- The Czechs indicated that they could be responsible for travel costs for all participants from the Czech Republic to CONUS (although he added that the GOCR would not be

disappointed if the USG offered to provide milair from Germany. They said that they had been left with the understanding in Washington that U.S. military aircraft would be used for transport to the sites, because it would take several additional days to reach Kwajalein otherwise.

-- The Czech Government will request a separate, private missile defense site visit for former PM Jiri Paroubek, possibly to Colorado Springs. (Note: Paroubek is the leader of CSSD, the largest opposition party in the parliament. If he were to modify his position to favor of a radar in the Czech Republic the Czech Government's task would get much easier. End note)

-- The Czech Government plans to work bilaterally with the United Kingdom to arrange a visit for Czech leaders to Fylingdales. The plan is for an MOD representative to go first, to assess the appropriateness of the tour for Czech political purposes, with a possible follow-on visit by parliamentarians.

-- The Czech interagency MD team praised the March 1st meetings given to three Czech Parliamentarians at NATO, saying they had been extremely helpful. They hoped similar meetings might take place at NATO in the future when other events brought the right people to Brussels.

-- Pojar said the Czech Government plans to accept the MDA's offer to several Czechs for a brief period at the MDA in Washington. The Czech officials would come from the MFA, MOD, and the General Staff. The Czech Embassy in Washington plans to approach MDA to work on the details of this visit.

15. (C/NF) High-level visits to the Czech Republic:

-- Pojar explained that, while the April 19 MD session at NATO is a very welcome development, the timing of a follow-on visit to Prague by General Obering might be challenging. The Czech Prime Minister, Defense Minister and Foreign Minister will all spend the majority of the days around April 19 on official trips outside the Czech Republic. Pojar asked if, as a fall back measure, MDA could provide an indication of when

PRAGUE 00000262 002.2 OF 003

General Obering will be in Europe in late April and early May. He hoped that an Obering visit could feature a full program including Parliamentarians, the relevant ministers, the State Security Council, and the press. While he understood if General Obering could not stay for two days, it would be helpful if he could leave behind some briefers to allow for a full two day program, maximizing the impact of the trip.

16. (C/NF) Technical issues:

-- Pojar said the Czech MD team is waiting for a U.S. decision on declassification of the maps indicating the location of the future site within the Brdy training area. He said declassification would be helpful in their public outreach efforts, and were optimistic that this will take place soon.

-- Pojar looked forward to the arrival in Prague of a radar expert who would be temporarily based at the Embassy to provide expert information the Czech Government could use in public outreach.

-- The Czechs appealed for as much information as possible on how the radar would be used. For example: they believe that the radar would be active for an average of only 3 hours per day in peacetime, a fact that could be very useful to them in public outreach.

-- Pojar asked for clarification of contradictory U.S. briefings that had described the radar as either 36m or 22m tall. He said the figure would have an impact, because NATO already has a radar in the Czech Republic that is close to 22m in size.

17. (C/NF) Future coordination: Pojar agreed that the Czech interagency missile defense team would brief U.S. Embassy representatives weekly.

18. (C/NF) Ambassador Gruber met Russian Ambassador to the Czech Republic Alexey Fedetov on March 12, primarily to

discuss missile defense. Fedetov was initially frosty, describing USG briefings to the Russian Government as merely briefings, rather than true consultations. Fedetov said the real test would be if these meetings would influence the final U.S. decision. Fedetov added the current level of concern was useful because it highlighted the political price/cost of any decision. He claimed the main problem was the project's impact on the strategic balance on the European continent. The Ambassador responded by recalling SecDef Gates' comments in Munich, observing that one Cold War was quite enough. He highlighted the U.S. commitment to openness, and the willingness of the Embassy to share information that would help avoid unnecessary tension. Fedetov raised the issue of an MD facility in the Caucasus, an issue the Ambassador dismissed as being merely theoretical, while the real issue to be dealt with is the concrete proposal for the Czech Republic and Poland. After a longer conversation on MD and other issues a visibly warmer Fedetov said he was grateful for the transparency and for the opportunity for the two missions to cooperate.

¶9. (C/NF) A crowd varying in size from 150 to 300 people marched through Prague on March 12 in support of missile defense. The initiative, which had some encouragement from the MFA, featured several well-known singers as well as a former Havel spokesperson. The next anti-base demonstration will take place in Prague on March 17.

¶10. (U) Embassy Prague has implemented the following division of labor for missile defense tasks within the Embassy. We encourage Washington action officers to be in direct contact with the listed officers as necessary to achieve our mutual goals in each category. We ask that at least the initial contact be cc'd to the coordinators.

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PRAGUE 00000262 003.2 OF 003

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